

## Mount St. Helens Joint Information Center

Gifford Pinchot National Forest Headquarters

10600 NE 51<sup>st</sup> Circle, 360-891-5180

### **Mount St. Helens Update**

VANCOUVER, Wash., October 7, 2004, 12:00 noon

Current status is Volcano Advisory (Alert Level 2); aviation color code ORANGE

#### **Mount St. Helens Volcano Activity**

Seismicity overnight has remained at very low levels. The low rate of seismic activity of the past day increased slightly. Earthquakes are presently occurring at a rate of about 1 to 1.5 per minute with maximum magnitudes of about 1.0.

Late Wednesday afternoon scientists were able to get brief views of the vents and the area of intense uplift on the south side of the 1980-86 lava dome. The scientists saw only weak puffs of steam coming from vents. They were able to confirm that the top of the area of intense uplift is at, or slightly above, the highest point on the lava dome, which suggests that some uplift has occurred during this period of low seismicity. Over the past six days there has been an uplift of approximately 250 feet.

They were also able to observe areas affected by the small debris flows (lahars) that spilled out of the crater and onto the Pumice Plain during the rainstorm in the early morning of Wednesday, October 6. These debris flows went a short distance toward both Spirit Lake and the North Fork Toutle River.

The Unified Command of the Emergency Coordination Center for the Mt. St. Helens incident will continue to assess areas currently closed to the public. The Unified Command is comprised of the USGS, the USDA Forest Service, and the state and counties. They will continue to monitor and coordinate between many agencies to protect public safety. All areas currently closed will remain closed until further notice.

Today, field crews will continue to harden global positioning system sites for the approaching winter, conduct a gas-sensing flight, take thermal images of the dome and crater floor, and make geological observations.

As a result of the intense unrest of the past eleven days, we infer that magma is at a very shallow level. During times of unrest, Mount St. Helens and similar volcanoes elsewhere typically go through episodic changes in level of unrest over periods of days to weeks, or even months. Such

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changes are in part driven by variations in the rate of magma movement. We expect fluctuations in the level of unrest to continue during coming days. Escalation of unrest could occur suddenly and perhaps lead to an eruption with very little warning. There may be little time to raise the alert level before a hazardous event occurs. Therefore, we continue to monitor the situation closely and will issue additional updates and changes in alert level as warranted.

Wind forecasts from the National Weather Service, combined with eruption models, show that winds this morning are southwesterly and any ash would drift to the northeast.

### **Area, Road, and Trail Closures**

There are a number of current area, road, and trail closures in the area. Ape Cave, near Cougar south of the mountain, is closed. Also closed is the Mt. Margaret back country located north of Spirit Lake and east of Coldwater Lake. Climbing above 4,800 feet is prohibited. Lava Canyon Recreation Area and Windy Ridge Viewpoint are closed.

Current road closures include State Route 504, at the Coldwater Ridge Visitor Center intersection to the Johnston Ridge Observatory, which remains closed. This section of SR 504 will remain closed until the USDA Forest Service indicates it is safe to reopen. Road closures are in place to protect public safety. Forest Road 81 is closed between Kalama Horse Camp and Cougar Snow Park. Forest Road 99 is closed at milepost 10 at Cascade Peaks. Forest Road 8303 is closed at the Trail of Two Forests. Forest Road 83 is closed at the Cougar Snow Park.

Current trail closures include all trails within 5 miles of the lava dome, including #184-Lava Canyon, #207-Truman, #216-Loowit, #216A-Ptarmigan, #227-Independence Pass, #234-Ape Canyon, #237-Blue Lake, #238-Toutle, #240-Sheep Canyon, #229-Hummocks, #211-Birth of a Lakes, and #224-Harmony.

### **Mount St. Helens Joint Information Center**

The following information is provided by the Unified Command of the Emergency Coordination Center for Mt. St. Helens based on information from the United States Geological Survey, the USDA Forest Service, and the state and counties.

Cooperating agencies to the Joint Information Center include the Washington Department of Revenue; the Washington State Governor's Office; USDA Forest Service; DOI Bureau of Land Management; US Geological Service; Washington Department of Emergency Services; Federal Emergency Management Agency; Washington Department of Natural Resources/Geology Division and Pacific Cascade Region; Clark County Health Department; Skamania County Health Department; Cowlitz County; Clark County; Pierce county; Cascade Volcano Observatory; US Coast Guard; City of Portland; Oregon Department of Corrections; Clackamas County Sheriff; Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue; and the Shriners Hospital.

The Cascades Volcanic Observatory is open to media for Photography and video only of the seismographs and other instruments between 4:50 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. and from 4:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. No interviews will be allowed so scientists can focus on their duties. The Observatory is

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located at 1300 S.E. Cardinal Court, near 164<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Tech Center Drive.

The Joint Information Center is at the USDA Forest Service Gifford Pinchot National Forest Headquarters. A conference bridge is available for the briefing. Media should call (210) 234-9881 and enter pin number 96721#.

The address of the USDA Forest Service Gifford Pinchot National Forest Headquarters is 10600 NE 51<sup>st</sup> Circle, Vancouver, Wash. The phone number for media to call to reach JIC staff is (360) 891-5180.

A daily press conference will be held at the Headquarters office of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest at 9:30 a.m.

The JIC will currently be staffed from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

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